

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 03647 181640Z  
ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3647

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4  
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SHUM, UR, UR  
SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS OF SOVIET DISSIDENTS' PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: MOSCOW 3545

SUMMARY: AS BEST WE CAN RECONSTRUCT IT FROM SLEPAK AND SEVERAL OF THE WESTERN NEWSMEN PRESENT, THE MARCH 16 DISSIDENT PRESS CONFERENCE WAS A HASTILY ORGANIZED AND CONFUSED AFFAIR INVOLVING FOUR COMPONENTS OF THE MOSCOW-BASED DISSIDENT COMMUNITY: SAKHAROV, WHO STANDS APART AND (IN THE SENSE OF PERSONAL AUTHORITY AND PRESTIGE) ABOVE THE OTHERS; JEWISH REFUSENIKS; THE PENTECOSTALISTS; AND THE ORLOV CSCE GROUP. THEIR COMMON THEME WAS THE ARREST OF ANATOLIY SHCHARANSKIY. SAKHAROV'S STATEMENTS ABOUT THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION ARE REPORTED REFTEL. OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEWS CONFERENCE ARE GIVEN BELOW. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS HELD IN THE LATE AFTERNOON OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, IN THE APARTMENT OF PROMINENT JEWISH REFUSENIK AND ORLOV GROUP  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 03647 181640Z

MEMBER VLADIMIR SLEPAK. IN ADDITION TO SAKHAROV AND HIS WIFE, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS IN ATTENDANCE INCLUDED GENERAL GRIGORENKO, MALVA LANDA, AND MRS. YURIY ORLOVA. AMONG THE JEWISH PARTICIPANTS WERE ALEKSANDR LERNER (WHO CHAIRED THE MEETING), SLEPAK, DINA AND JOSEPH BAYLIN, IDA NUDEL, AND FELIKS KANDEL. A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PENTE-

COSTALISTS, VASILII PATRYUSHEV, ALSO TOOK PART.

2. THE MAIN EVENT OF THE CONFERENCE WAS SAKHAROV'S WRITTEN STATEMENT ABOUT SHCHARANSKIY'S ARREST, WHICH WAS READ BY SAKHAROV'S WIFE WHILE HE SAT ON THE SIDELINES NURSING WHAT APPEARED TO BE A BAD COLD. SHCHARANSKIY'S ABSENCE WAS FELT IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE: USUALLY HE PROVIDES ENGLISH INTERPRETATION, AND NO ONE HAD THOUGHT TO FIND A SUBSTITUTE. MRS. SAKHAROVA READ THE STATEMENT IN RUSSIAN, TO THE DISMAY OF MOST OF THE WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS PRESENT. AMONG THE STATEMENT'S MAIN POINTS:

- THE SLANDEROUS MARCH 4 IZVESTIYA ITEMS RESEMBLED THE WORST OF STALINIST TIMES;
- IZVESTIYA'S ACCUSATIONS ABOUT SPYING WERE "FANTASTIC," AND SOME U.S. CITIZENS HAD BEEN FALSELY ACCUSED;
- SHCHARANSKIY HAD BEEN REFUSED PERMISSION TO EMIGRATE TO ISRAEL SEVERAL YEARS AGO AND HAD LATER JOINED THE CSCE MONITORING GROUP BUT LIVED AN OPEN LIFE AND HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH STATE SECRETS;
- SOVIET AUTHORITIES WERE TRYING TO REVERSE RECENT POSITIVE TRENDS IN THE USSR AND THEIR OUTRAGEOUS ACTS WERE OF TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE TO THE ENTIRE WORLD;
- DEFENSE OF SHCHARANSKIY, ORLOV, GINZBURG, TIKHIY AND RUDENKO WAS A HUMANITARIAN OBLIGATION AND WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO DETENTE, WHICH MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 03647 181640Z

BASED UPON MUTUAL TRUST.

3. AS MRS. SAKHAROVA READ THE STATEMENT, CORRESPONDENTS NOTICED THAT SAKHAROV WAS PRESENT. WHEN SHE FINISHED, SAKHAROV WAS ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE RELEASE OF SHTERN. SAKHAROV REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE WELCOMED THIS DEVELOPMENT, SAW IT AS EVIDENCE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF WORLD OPINION, AND HOPED OTHERS WOULD BE RELEASED. SAKHAROV ADDED THAT HE BELIEVE SHTERN'S RELEASE WAS TIMED JUST BEFORE SHCHARANSKIY'S ARREST TO DECREASE THE IMPACT ON WORLD OPINION OF THE ARREST.

4. WHEN AN UNIDENTIFIED JEWISH REFUSENIK MADE A STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF JEWISH ACTIVISTS, CALLING UPON WORLD AND U.S. JEWRY FOR SUPPORT OF SOVIET JEWS AT THIS "DRAMATIC TURNING POINT" IN THE HISTORY OF SOVIET JEWRY WHICH WAS COMPARABLE TO THE ANTI-SEMITIC "DOCTORS PLOT" OF 1952 AS WELL AS TO THE

DREYFUS CASE.

5. NEXT CAME A STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF SOVIET PENTECOSTALISTS, DELIVERED BY SPOKESMAN AND PENTECOSTALIST FROM NAKHODKA, VASILIIY PETRYUSHEV, ASKING WORLD CHRISTIANS TO FAST AND PARTICIPATE IN A DAY OF PRAYER ON SUNDAY, MARCH 27 IN SUPPORT OF YURIY ORLOV, ALEKSANDR GINZBURG, AND SHCHARANSKIY.

6. AT THIS POINT THE NEWSMEN DIRECTED FURTHER QUESTIONS TO SAKHAROV. AFTER EXPLAINING WHAT THE MEANT IN HIS STATEMENT BY SOVIET "BLACKMAIL" OF THE USG, SAKHAROV REPORTEDLY SAID THAT ROY MEDVEDEV'S RECENT STATEMENT TO AN AFP CORRESPONDENT (IN WHICH MEDVEDEV CRITICIZED PRESIDENT CARTER FOR ILL-CONSIDERED STATEMENTS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USSR) WAS THE STATEMENT OF A "TRAITOR."  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 MOSCOW 03647 181640Z

SAKHAROV, SECONDED BY GRIGORENKO, ADDED THAT MEDVEDEV SPOKE ONLY FOR HIMSELF, AND THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S POSITION WAS IN FACT BOTH NOBLE AND EFFECTIVE.

7. THE MEETING ENDED WITH ORLOV GROUP MEMBER MALVA LANDA STATING THAT SHCHARANSKIY HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN A "BANDIT ATTACK" IN ORDER TO DEPRIVE THE ORLOV GROUP OF ONE OF ITS CHIEF SPOKESMEN.

8. IN PRIVATE COMMENTS TO US THAT EVENING, SLEPAK UNDERSCORED THE SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE OF THE JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE HELD BY HUMAN RIGHTS, RELIGIOUS AND REFUSENIK DISSIDENTS. HE OBSERVED THAT PRESSURE FROM SOVIET AUTHORITIES ON ALL DISSIDENTS HAD INCREASED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT JOINT ACTION WAS NOW THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE A PUBLIC PROTEST. SLEPAK SAID THAT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF MOSCOW JEWISH ACTIVISTS, THE KEY AIM OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS TO SENSITIZE AMERICAN JEWISH OPINION. HE SAID HE FELT THAT AMERICAN JEWS HAD IN RECENT MONTHS EASED THEIR EFFORTS TO SUPPORT SOVIET JEWRY. HE HOPED THE ARREST OF SHCHARANSKIY WOULD CAUSE AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS TO TAKE UP THE CUDGELS ON BEHALF OF SHCHARANSKIY AND OTHER IMPRISONED DISSIDENTS.  
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